

# STRIVE

Tackling the structural drivers of HIV

## Understanding the masculinities, gender norms and intimate partner violence affecting the female sex workers of northern Karnataka

*A qualitative inquiry with intimate partners*



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**Suggested citation:**

Huynh, A., Doddamane, M., Chevrier, C., Nair, S., Bhattacharjee, P., Lorway, R. & Khan, S. (2014) *Understanding the masculinities, gender norms and intimate partner violence affecting the female sex workers of northern Karnataka – A qualitative inquiry with intimate partners*. Bangalore. Karnataka Health Promotion Trust.

**Editor:** Yumi K.C

**Cover photo:** Priya Pillai

**Design and layout:** Sudha Menon

**Publisher:**

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## Support

This study was conducted with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, STRIVE, and funded by UK Aid from the Department for International Development (DFID). STRIVE is a DFID funded research consortium based at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with partners in India, Tanzania, and South Africa. It focuses on understanding the structural forces - in particular stigma, gender-based violence, poverty and drinking norms - that combine in different ways to create vulnerability to HIV transmission and to undermine prevention.

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the UK's Department for International Development.

## Ethical Approval

This study was approved by the Institutional Ethical Review Board of St. John's Medical College and Hospital, Karnataka, on the 13 November, 2012 (IERB study reference number 191/2012).

## Research Team

Study concept development, development of research protocols and analysis (University of Manitoba): Parinita Bhattacharjee, Robert Lorway, Shamshad Khan, Anthony Huynh. Development of research protocols, training of researchers, local supervision, field team coordination, data collection supervision and dissemination (Karnataka Health Promotion Trust, India): Mahesh Doddamane, Sapna Nair. Data collection supervision, data collection: Srikantha Murthy, Chidambar Kabur. Principal Investigator (Karnataka Health Promotion Trust, India): Shajy Isac. Co-Principal Investigators: Robert Lorway, Shamshad Khan, Parinita Bhattacharjee.



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## Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the *Chaitanya AIDS Tadehattuva Mahila Sangha* for partnering with us on this study. It would have been impossible to design and conduct this study without their active participation and support.

We are especially thankful to all the sex workers and their partners who participated in this study and shared their perceptions, experiences and life stories with the field researchers.

We would also like to acknowledge that the study was conducted prior to the highly publicised rape trials in New Delhi in 2013. The findings from the study are expected to feed into future prevention efforts against violence against female sex workers, and women.

We thank Priya Pillai from KHPT for coordinating the production of this report.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


## Background and Objectives

In India's campaign to control the spread of HIV, the influence of structural factors on people's vulnerability to infection has been less recognised and less well understood. In particular, the relationships between masculinities, gender norms, intimate partner violence (IPV) and sex workers' vulnerability to HIV infection have received inadequate attention from researchers and practitioners alike. In Bagalkot district of northern Karnataka, where HIV prevalence among female sex workers (FSWs) is very high, the FSWs face sexual, physical, and emotional violence from their intimate partners (IPs) in addition to economic and social vulnerability. Existing norms of male dominance, infidelity, and violence as a legitimate form of discipline increase sex workers' exposure to violence and their risk of contracting HIV/STIs in intimate relationships. There is a significant gap in understanding why FSWs are subjected to violence from their IPs and how this might shape HIV vulnerability. In particular, little is known about the perspectives of the partners of sex workers on their relationship with the FSW.

The objectives of the study were a) to provide evidence of the impact of norms around masculinity, gender and violence on the dynamics of IPV among the FSWs; b) to understand from the perspective of the IPs, how social and cultural norms pertaining to manhood are constructed and reproduced, how they are linked to gender and violence-related norms, and what are the causes and effects of IPV in their relationship with their FSW lovers. The findings from this study will contribute not only to the growing body of empirical knowledge on IPV in the context of sex work but also to the on-going interventions that KHPT and local community-based organizations (CBOs) are jointly implementing in Bagalkot and Bijapur districts of Northern Karnataka.

## Methods

The study took place in Mudhol, Jamkhandi, and Rabkavi Banhatti talukas of Bagalkot District, where the HIV prevention interventions mentioned above currently operate. The study employed qualitative research methods, including focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews (IDI), and participant observation. Initially, two FGDs were conducted with FSWs (N= 17 women) as a starting point of research to understand the key issues and challenges they faced in their relationships with their IPs. The ideas shared by the women formed the basis for four focus group discussions (N= 34 men) and in-depth



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interviews (N= 30) with the IPs through which relationship issues and violence, both in general and in relation to their female sex partners, were explored. Concurrently, participant observation and the taking of ethnographic field notes were undertaken for four months in the research sites to learn how the IPs behaved in their milieu and to expand the understanding of masculinity within this society.

The participants for the FGDs with FSWs were identified through a local FSW collective, while the IPs were chosen using a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling. Informed consent was obtained in the local language, participants were assured of anonymity, and participation was voluntary. All group and individual interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analysed. Accepted procedures for qualitative data analysis were followed, with parallel review of transcripts, developing codes, and grouping into core concepts or themes. The IP participants ranged between 20 and 52 years in age; were mostly working class (e.g., farmers, daily wage earners, and drivers) and represented all caste groups. Participant observation sites included the following: villages, temples, market places, restaurants, agricultural fields, movie theatres, cultural events, and homes of the IPs and FSWs.

## Findings

Although the term 'intimate partner' defines a man primarily as an FSW's lover, the study found that these men are defined more by their exploitative working conditions than by their sexual relationships. Most men, instead of fighting against the unfair wages and gruelling working conditions, attributed their sense of masculinity and honour to their work ethic. Male stereotypes were continually reinvented and reinforced through the media and men who did not conform to their gender roles were denounced. Patriarchal conceptions of gender and gender roles provided the basis for male dominance, and legitimised a subordinate view of women. Being a male head of the household entailed the subordination of women to a domestic subservient role and the use of violence was an accepted way to do so. The exploitation that men suffered in their work environment was re-enacted by them at home, which placed their partners at the risk of violence.

Men engaged in intimate physical relationships as a way not only of securing a sense of control over their precarious environment but also of reforging/reimagining lost bonds. Although their relationships with their lovers and wives served different purposes, violence was a common mechanism through which the men maintained their dominance over




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women. The relationship with their lovers was not merely sexual, but contained dimensions of pleasure, dependency, intimacy, and violence. *Devadasis* are viewed as more sexually voracious women and this justified their abuse and sexual exploitation by men. While men were wary of the law, they viewed it as unfairly discriminating against them and breaking up family cohesion.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

By examining masculinities and norms around gender and violence through the perspectives, motivations, and practices of men, this study has identified and provided a deeper understanding of structural factors that lead to IPV against female sex workers. These insights have facilitated the formulation of recommendations for targeted interventions to reduce violence in FSWs' intimate relationships. The broad recommendations include changing prevailing patriarchal attitudes related to IPV by redefining concepts of masculinity to include respect for women, creating collectives/forums to discuss relationship challenges, promoting awareness of why and how violence against women should be eliminated, engaging leaders/role models among IPs to speak against IPV, increasing awareness and disapproval of domestic violence, and building networks to help people recognise and challenge structural disparities that result in violence and exploitation within society that is reproduced in intimate relationships between men and women.



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# 1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

India has the third largest number of people with HIV/AIDS in the world (about 2.27 million)<sup>1</sup>, after South Africa and Nigeria. In recent years, the epidemic seems to be making inroads into rural areas and the “low-prevalence” states, which, given India’s limited resources, high disease burden, and relatively poor health infrastructure, can have serious consequences, jeopardizing India’s fulfilment of its Millennium Development Goals<sup>1-2</sup>. In the past decade, India has made substantial progress in controlling the epidemic and has increasingly recognised the importance of addressing the social and structural drivers of HIV<sup>3</sup>. However, there have been limited attempts to understand the ways in which structural forces increase vulnerability to HIV and how to intervene to address these forces<sup>4-7</sup>. The relationships between masculinities, gender norms, and intimate partner violence within sex work is one such area that has received inadequate attention from researchers and practitioners alike.

Female sex workers (FSWs) have long been known to have high risk and vulnerability to HIV in India. In northern Karnataka particularly, and especially in Bagalkot district, the prevalence of HIV in FSWs stands as high as 34.55%<sup>8</sup>. Yet, much of the research related to FSWs has focused on their mapping and size estimation, typologies, biological and behavioural surveillance, condom-use and other prevention technologies. Only a few studies have focused on their structural and cultural contexts of vulnerability, on collectivisation efforts and their impacts, as well as on personal relationships, including experiences of violence by their intimate partners (IPs), and sexual coercion<sup>9-12</sup>. In a 2011 enumeration exercise conducted by the Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT), about 46% of FSWs<sup>13</sup> reported that they had experienced violence from their IPs in the last 12 months. In comparison to their clients, FSWs experienced higher levels of intimate partner violence and different types of abuse including sexual, physical, emotional, and financial violence<sup>14-15</sup>. Moreover, FSWs who face violence from IPs are more at risk of contracting HIV infection compared to other women, as condom use becomes very difficult to negotiate<sup>16</sup>. In a study with clients of FSWs, despite having heard about HIV infection, they had inadequate information about the illness and did not view it as a threat<sup>17</sup>. In addition to their economic and social vulnerability, there is an emotional bonding with these partners which is exploited by the IPs to increase their control over the women<sup>18-19</sup>. Female sex workers in particular are likely to face multiple burdens because of the prevailing patriarchal gender norms and the strong social stigma associated with their work<sup>20</sup>. The existing norms

# 1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

around male dominance, fidelity and violence as a legitimate form of discipline increases the sex workers' vulnerability to violence and risk of contracting HIV/STIs in intimate relationships<sup>21</sup>.

However, there is a significant gap in understanding why FSWs are subjected to so much violence from their IPs and how this might be linked to HIV vulnerability. While there is a large body of work that describes the experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) among women in the general population (e.g., Silverman et al., 2008; Decker et al., 2009)<sup>22-26</sup>, little attention has been paid to such experiences by FSWs. Moreover, in the context of IPV among sex workers, there have been very few efforts to comprehend the perspectives of the partners of sex workers on the relationship itself.

This study has enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the contextual factors that lead to IPV within sex work through focusing on masculinities and norms around gender and violence, and specifically on the perspectives, motivations and practices of men. In turn, this has facilitated the formulation of recommendations for improved planning and programming of the targeted interventions among FSWs and their partners.

KHPT, along with local community-based organisations (CBOs), is currently implementing a program with about 2000 FSWs who have intimate partners in Bagalkot and Bijapur districts of northern Karnataka. The program focuses on reducing the risk and vulnerability of the FSWs to partner violence and STI/HIV transmission in these intimate relationships. Both the FSWs and their primary intimate partners are the beneficiaries of this programme. The key components of the programme include individual and couple counselling, group reflection processes among FSWs and IPs, linkages to services, crisis management and community awareness around violence and the law. We hope that the findings from this study will feed directly into the on-going interventions in northern Karnataka in preventing violence against FSWs and the spread of HIV/STIs as well as contribute to the growing body of empirical knowledge on IPV in the specific context of sex work.

The many contours of masculinity and gender norms must be explored and examined in the context of sex work, and particularly in settings such as those in India where heterosexuality is the dominant route of HIV infection. As Connell (2005) suggests, the "situational specificity of masculinity needs close attention" as a socially constructed, fluid category (responding to and shaping particular situations)<sup>26</sup>. The goal of

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this study was to understand the relationship between intimate partner violence and ideas of masculinity among the IPs of FSWs. In the context of this study, IPs initially begin as clients of FSWs and gradually develop into their non-commercial/intimate partners.

## Objectives of the Study

- To generate qualitative insights useful for future planning and to refine KHPT's current programme to reduce the risk of HIV/STIs and IPV among FSWs
- To provide evidence of the impact of norms around masculinity, gender and violence on the dynamics of IPV among the FSWs
- To understand how social and cultural norms pertaining to manhood are constructed and reproduced within the context of intimate partners, and how they are linked to gender and violence-related norms, which influence and perpetuate IPV from the perspective of the IPs of FSWs
- To understand the different forms of support provided by IPs and their link to violence committed by them in their relationship with FSWs
- To understand the causes and effects of IPV as narrated by IPs, specially focusing on the development of norms

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology we adopted is underpinned by critical theoretical perspectives. These perspectives guide researchers to illustrate how different forms of power operate in society, and how individuals understand and make sense of them<sup>25-26</sup>. A central methodological concern is to interpret and understand individual experiences within the context of the individual's broader social, political and cultural relations. This kind of research deliberately explores the dynamics between the realms of the individual and the social, and actively engages people in examining their own knowledge and understandings. Drawing on such critical methodological perspectives, this study employed qualitative research methods (including focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and participant observation) to attain the stated goals.

### 2.1 Study Area

The study took place in the three *talukas* (administrative subdivisions below the district level) of Mudhol, Jamkhandi, and Rabkavi Banhatti in Bagalkot district, northern Karnataka, where the HIV prevention program mentioned above currently operates. Members of the research group

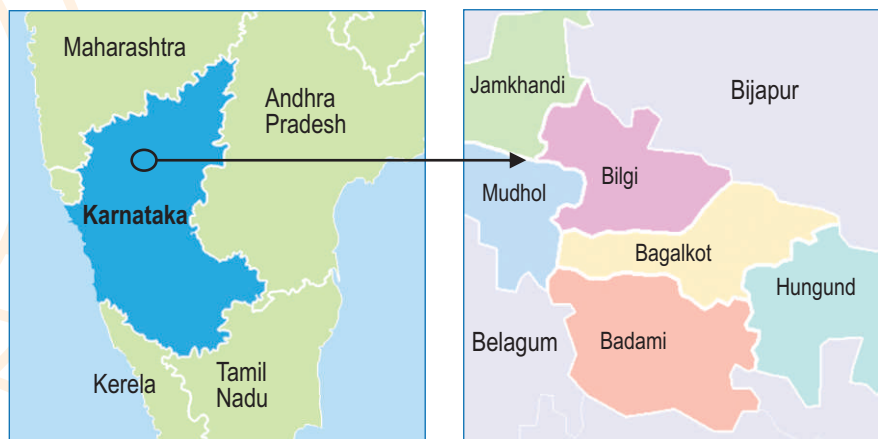


Figure 1. Map of Karnataka and Bagalkot district

have long established relationships with the community, having already conducted other studies on areas related to HIV and AIDS, which provided a foundation for this study. The study was undertaken in collaboration with a CBO, the *Chaitanya AIDS Tadehattuva Mahila Sangha*.

### 2.2 Political Economy of the Study Area

It is important to provide a broad overview of the political economy of growth and human development, both for India in general and for the study area in particular, in order to contextualise the ethnographic data. This is in keeping with the critical dimension of our research.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Since the early 1990s, the United Nation's Human Development Report has gone beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to define wellbeing more broadly to include measures such as health, education and living standards. It has consistently ranked India among the bottom fifty six nations of the world. More than a third (32.7%) of the Indian population live below the poverty line, with 28.6% living in severe poverty<sup>29</sup>. Marginalised groups such as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes continue to have low human development attainments. More than 90% of the workforce are informal workers (with 92% of these workers without any social or job security), and the informal economy contributes 50% of the national product<sup>30</sup>. In Karnataka, 23.6% of its population live below the poverty line. The development of Karnataka is highly skewed, with Bangalore accounting for over 56% of the state's GDP, contrasting with a high concentration of poverty in the northern Karnataka districts where this study is based<sup>31-33</sup>.

Imbalances in basic educational facilities in Karnataka have resulted in poor literacy rates in northern Karnataka region (56.32%). While the average number of schools in southern Karnataka grew marginally from 99 to 102 schools for every 100,000 children between 1999 – 2000, the number declined to 84 schools/100,000 children (compared to 91 schools/100,000 children in 1958-59) in northern Karnataka. Corresponding with the decline in the number of schools is the gap in access to technology-based education. Opportunities to improve socio-economic standing through education are generally captured by the urban and privileged classes<sup>34</sup>. Children from rural and economically depressed backgrounds are commonly deprived of access to higher education and employment in the formal workforce because of their poverty and their parents' lack of interest in education.

Fifty two percent of Karnataka's workforce is either illiterate or only have up to primary level education<sup>32</sup>. The literacy rate of the state is 67.04% (59.68% in rural areas, 81.05% in urban areas)<sup>35</sup>. The female literacy rate in northern Karnataka is much lower (48.30%) than not only the national average, but also than southern Karnataka (63.02%)<sup>33</sup>. In the research area of Bagalkot, the adult literacy rate is 68.82%, thereby ranking it 22 out of the 30 districts in Karnataka<sup>36</sup>. The extremely low educational and literacy attainment levels of the workers in the state therefore corresponds to a higher concentration of workers in very low paid irregular casual jobs or in self-employment with no job security.

The reasons for migration for males and females showed distinct pattern. For females in both rural and urban areas, the reason for the



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bulk of the migrants was marriage: for 90% of rural female migrants and 58% of the urban female migrants the reason was marriage. The reason for migration for the male migrant, on the other hand, was dominated by employment related reasons, in both the rural and urban areas. Nearly 17% of rural male migrants and 60% of urban male migrants had migrated due to employment related reasons<sup>32</sup>.

Unexpectedly, rural wages and earnings for males and females in the state are substantively lower (28% and 39% respectively) compared to other parts of India. In urban Karnataka, on the other hand, the average wage of regular workers is higher by 6% compared to the rest of urban India<sup>32</sup>. This sizeable dichotomy between rural and urban earnings, and between males and females within the state, raises some of the issues which are essentially related to the differences in education, skills and living costs in the rural and urban areas.

An average of 4.2% of the labour force remained unemployed on a daily basis during 2009-10, which is lower than the all-India average of 6.6%<sup>30</sup>. The Current Daily Status (CDS) unemployment rate in Karnataka is found to be higher in urban areas (4.7%) compared to rural areas (4%). However, the rural female unemployment rate at 4.1% is higher compared to 3.9% for the rural male, and urban female unemployment rate at 6% is higher compared to 4.4% for the urban male. This corresponds to the female unemployment rate being higher than that of males in both rural and urban areas in other parts of India.

In Karnataka, about 87% of the workers work in the unorganised sector<sup>32</sup>. Self-employment is the predominant form of employment<sup>32</sup>. The self-employed accounted for about 51% of total employment followed by that of casual (33%) and regular workers (16%). In rural Karnataka, females had a higher share in casual work (51.6%) followed by self-employment (42.8%), while for males, the reverse is true. The share of females (5.6%) in rural regular jobs is lower than that of males (6.9%). However, in urban areas, regular jobs are the predominant form of employment for females (39.9%) followed by self-employment (34%); whereas in the case of males, the share of self-employment (39.5%) is a little higher than that of regular salaried employment (39.3%). The high rate of casual employment, especially among rural women, is a cause for concern due to workplace exploitation and the lack of opportunities to improve their skill base.

For many rural residents of Karnataka, agriculture is the major occupation. According to the 2010 census, farmers and agricultural

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In an environment of unequal growth and precarious labour conditions, it is important to interrogate the construction of masculinity in order to understand the complex gender dynamics between men and women. More specifically, we need to analyse how this construction impacts the IPV experienced by the FSWs.

labourers formed 56% of the workforce of Karnataka<sup>37</sup>. In the research area of Bagalkot, 65% of workers are engaged in agriculture related activities<sup>36</sup>. One important feature of agricultural labourers is that the percentage of women (58.19%) overrides the percentage of men (41.81%) in the sector<sup>35</sup>. However, the share of agricultural employment in Karnataka and all-India has declined by 5% between 2005 and 2010<sup>31</sup>. This is also reflected in the earlier national census figures. Between 1991 and 2001, over seven million people for whom cultivation was their main livelihood, quit farming<sup>39</sup>. The crisis engendered in this decline can be witnessed in the record number of farm suicides. The National Crime Records Bureau reported a total of 2,56,913 farm suicides between 1995 to 2011, the worst ever recorded wave of suicides of its kind in human history. Close to two-thirds of all farm suicides have occurred in five States (including Karnataka).

Karnataka has experienced an economic structural adjustment which has seen a decline in agricultural employment, as labour shifts to the secondary and tertiary sectors. The share of services in total employment has risen from 22.1% in 2004-05 to 25.9% in 2009-10. Paradoxically, the rise in the share of unorganised employment in spite of an increase in the share of the organised sector workforce, indicates that this shift is not accompanied by a qualitative improvement in conditions of employment, which largely remain precarious.

In such an environment of unequal growth and precarious labour conditions, it is important to interrogate the construction of masculinity in order to understand the complex gender dynamics between men and women. More specifically, we need to analyse how this construction impacts the IPV experienced by the FSWs.

### 2.3 Research Methods

In this study, the point of entry to the research participants (mainly the IPs) was through the *Chaitanya AIDS TadeGattuva Mahila Sangha*. We employed focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews (IDIs), and participant observation data-gathering tools. The strength of FGDs as an interview technique lies in the opportunity it presents to observe interactions between group members, and the collection of data on specific topics. Focus groups enabled researchers to interact directly with



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a selected number of respondents to facilitate the clarification of responses, and allowed respondents to react to and build upon the responses of other group members. IDIs facilitated further exploration of issues raised in FGDs, and particularly enabled participants to reflect on personal experiences to illustrate their thinking and understandings on specific topics which the researcher wanted to investigate on a deeper level. Thus, the combination of group and individual interviews created avenues for capturing both the depth and detail of information expressed. These techniques were adopted, together with close participant observation and the taking of ethnographic field notes over the four month engagement period with the people in their environment.

### This research project involved the following steps:

1. We conducted two FGDs with FSWs (N=17 women) to understand the key issues and challenges they faced in the context of their relationships with their IPs. All of the FSWs identified themselves as *Devadasis*<sup>1</sup> with the exception of one. The ideas shared by FSWs formed the basis for group discussions and interviews with the IPs.
2. Using purposeful and snowball sampling, we invited IPs to participate in four FGDs (N=34 men). We began with purposeful sampling where participants were chosen as per the needs of the study. This was followed by snowball sampling where new participants were identified during FGDs by others as knowledgeable on the topic. We conducted a total of four FGDs, two each in Mudhol and Jamkhandi. FGDs among IPs of FSWs focused on relationship issues and violence, both in general and in relation to their female sex partners. Here, ideas and insights provided by FSWs were used to cross-check and gain further insights from the IPs.
3. A select number of focus group participants were then chosen to be followed up for IDIs, either because of their in-depth knowledge on the topic or due to the need for further exploration of issues raised in the group discussions. A total of 30 IDIs were conducted, 15 each in rural and urban areas.
4. Participant observation and the taking of ethnographic field notes were undertaken for four months in Mudhol, Jamkhandi, and Rabkavi Banhatti to facilitate an understanding of how the IPs behaved in their milieu. Some of the sites frequented included: villages, temples, market places, restaurants, agricultural fields, movie theatres, cultural events, and homes of the IPs and FSWs.

<sup>1</sup>The *Devadasi* tradition involves a religious rite in which adolescent girls are dedicated, through marriage, to different gods and goddesses, after which they become the wives or servants of the deities and perform various temple duties. Over time, these duties came to include provision of sexual services to patrons of the temples. The sex work associated with *Devadasi* has become increasingly commercialised in many contexts, and is socially and culturally embedded.' Macchiwalla T and Bhattacharjee P. Rural Sex Work Targeted Interventions; February 2012.

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Research assistants administered consent forms (in English and *Kannada*) at the study sites. As part of the consent procedure, participants were assured of anonymity and of the voluntary nature of their participation. They were also informed that their decision to participate will not affect their access to health clinics and other services provided by the CBO.

### 2.4 Analysis

All group and individual interviews were audio-taped (with the participants' permission), transcribed and analysed. Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity of the participants. Accepted procedures for qualitative data analysis were followed - transcripts were reviewed by two team members; initial code categories were identified and a coding scheme was developed. As subsequent interviews were reviewed, the coding scheme was updated to reflect the emerging range of codes. Preliminary codes were then grouped into core concepts or themes.

### 2.5 Demographic Profiles

The age of the male participants in the IDIs ranged between 23 and 52 years, with the mean being at 34 years. More than half (58%) had received formal education, ranging between those with one and nine years of school education; 32% reported that they had continued their education after Middle School (one had a university degree) while 10% were illiterate. The vast majority of the participants (28 out of 31) were married. Equal numbers of the male participants were from Scheduled Castes (castes identified by the government to be socially and economically backward) and *Lingayat* (adherents of a particular Hindu faith centred on Shiva; also, educationally and financially better off) (42% each). Thirteen percent were Muslim and only one participant was from a Scheduled Tribe (another group of historically disadvantaged people recognised in the constitution). Most of the participants could be identified as working class as their main occupations ranged broadly from being drivers (29%), construction workers (22.5%), services industry workers (16%), farmers (10%), electricians, tailors, factory workers, security guards to handloom weavers (22.5%).

Two FGDs were conducted with a total of 17 FSWs. These participants were mostly peer educators and community mobilisers of the CBO who partnered in this study. Through these FGDs the attempt was to mainly gain from the FSWs perspectives on IPV as a starting point of research. However the focus of the study was mainly on men, hence the rest of the report describes the findings from the research done with the men.

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The participants of the FGDs were all women and belonged to Scheduled Castes, and aged between 22 to 38 years old. The average age of the participants was 31 years. The vast majority of the participants (13 out of 17) had less than nine years of formal schooling, and two were illiterate. A little over half (53%) reported their occupation as community mobilisers or peer educators, while 12% said they were housemaids.

Four FGDs were held with a total of 34 men ranging from 20 to 50 years old (with 30 being the average age). While 20% of the participants reported being illiterate, 38% had received at least 10 years of formal education (one had a university degree). Only three men (8.8%) were unmarried. A little less than half of the participants were from Scheduled Castes (47%), 5% were from other Backward Castes, 8% from a Scheduled Tribe and 38% were from General Castes (*Lingayat and Panchal*). More than a quarter (26%) of the participants reported being farmers, while 23% were daily wage earners, 18% were drivers and 15% were businessmen. The remaining 18% reported being tailors, clerks or handloom weavers.

Participant observation was conducted in the areas of Mudhol, Jamkhandi, and Rabkavi Banhatti between December and March. In the villages, a significant number of participants were farmers who worked in the fields, whereas in the towns occupations ranged from being drivers, factory workers to tailors. During each field visit, the researchers interacted with a group of around 5-15 men, which gives a total of about 40 men. The age of the male participants varied up to 50 years old. It is important to note that the men did not identify as IP and had no prior involvement in the FGDs and IDIs. However, informal interactions with the local men provided the opportunity to gain broader understanding of masculinity in society.

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### 3.1 Work and Masculinity

This section explores how masculinity is a site that is constantly contested and reaffirmed in the context of the precarious economic conditions in northern Karnataka, which in turn impacts the gender relations between men and women. In the town of Mudhol, for example, because of the difficulty in finding employment in nearby factories and the pressures from the rising cost of living, it was common to see women in the informal trading sector selling items such as bananas, onions, tomatoes, and spices on the streets. Most men, on the other hand, worked for many hours a day either as agricultural labourers, bus drivers or auto-rickshaw drivers. Instead of fighting against unfair wages and gruelling working conditions, men attributed their sense of masculinity and honour to their work ethic. Among the IPs involved in agricultural labour, cultivating crops like sugarcane was viewed as both labour intensive and profitable, which underscored the economic and social importance of their wage.

An IP, who is a daily waged agriculture labourer, explained:

*[B]ecause of their hard work, men get paid more than women.  
(Kiranmay, 24)*

The physically demanding work men engaged in further reinforced gender binaries. For instance, the men in Chikkur village reflected the commonly held perception that their work was more valuable in comparison to women's work. The men who the researchers spoke to ranged in age from their teens to late 60s. They described their work as cultivating, ploughing, and fertilising the land, whereas women's work was caring for the children, going to the market, feeding the animals, and assisting men in the fields. Men took great pride in their agriculture labour, and spoke about the importance, skill, difficulty, and patience required. Although the men in the group acknowledged that women's overall workload was greater compared to men, they described women's labour as less physical and less productive, and consequently less valuable.

Furthermore, they pointed out that "hard work makes a man, a man". Here, masculinity is tied to the value and amount of labour expended on production in the public sphere. Conversely, a man who did not perform

**Men described women's labour as less physical and productive, and consequently less valuable.**

*Ploughing, cultivating, tractor driving, bus driving, truck driving, watering the land—all this work can be done by men. Women's work is to cook, bathe children and do household chores.  
(Gagan, 48, motor mechanic)*

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his function as a working man was not regarded as a man:

*We call him Chakka [pansy or sissy]. Because he takes money from his wife, drinks alcohol with that money and beats the wife after drinking. (Akash, 33, handloom weaver)*

Although men's view of violence meted out by *Chakka* were unacceptable, it was justified in the case of a working man who hit his wife/lover when drunk. Hence, only 'real' men have the right to hit women without social opprobrium. Not only was working an important aspect of the men's masculinity, it also figured in their roles as husbands and fathers:

Working was an important aspect of men's masculinity and of their roles as husbands and fathers. If a working man hit his wife/lover when drunk, the violence was justified. Men's roles as providers were conditional upon wives fulfilling their domestic duties.

*Being a man, he must be able to run the family with his earnings; he must (be) able to meet the minimum needs of his family members. A woman will find another man when her first partner fails to provide food. (Ijay, 35, hotel server)*

Men who failed to fulfil their role as providers also risked losing their partners. However, their role as providers was conditional upon the wife fulfilling her domestic duties.

*She is my wife. She came to my house as my wife, and then she has to manage the family well, right? I will take care of her if she treats me with good attitude. I won't send her to work outside. (Gajanan, 33, driver)*

The sense of entitlement that men had over their wives was strongly rooted in the belief that only when wives fulfilled their part of the bargain as domestic caregivers with "good attitude[s]", will the men be their providers. Furthermore, the degree in which gender roles were upheld was contingent upon the men's specific social class. For example, men from working class or rural backgrounds believed it was important to adhere to the more rigid gender roles. As such, it was not uncommon for wives to work inside the homes while the husbands worked outside.

Although women in the *talukas* did work in the public sphere, the duties associated with their jobs were an extension of their domestic chores.

During visits to the different *talukas*, women were commonly seen selling or purchasing grains, vegetables, or fruits on the streets or working inside the kitchen of a restaurant hidden from the public gaze while men served food to the patrons.

During a visit to a Fareeha's home, she would help prepare food

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alongside her sister while taking care of her sister's children. Not only did she support her family through the domestic work, but she also provided financial support through her sex work. In the case of FSWs, not only do they have the double responsibility of working inside and outside the home, but they also bore the social stigma that their paid work carried.

Contrast this with the celebration of male superiority in a village in Mudhol, where a worker who individually loaded 32 tonnes of sugar cane onto a truck was feted by the villagers. Great admiration was expressed not only for his physical strength, but his dedication and commitment to his work. Men and children were sprayed in purple powder and firecrackers were let off in the celebration. The sugarcane cutters who accompanied the truck into town danced to music blaring from the vehicle, and were welcomed by loud applause from the villagers who also joined in the dance. Here, societal value is clearly ascribed to work which is not only profitable, but also in line with accepted gender and social roles.

The neoliberal transformation of the agrarian economy has impacted on gender relations, as well as contributed to men's sense of alienation from their environment. In the streets of Mudhol, the sentiments expressed by an 18 year old youth called Harith echoed the feelings of working class men who do not find comfort in their place in society. Harith had dropped out of school after seven years of schooling and worked as a wood cutter to support his mother, having lost his father while still an infant. As he discussed his background, themes of fate emerged as explanations for his misfortunes. He responded with a proverb when asked about his ambitions: *"there is only so much space in a bed for your legs,"* suggesting that a person's desires should stay within set boundaries. He felt trapped by the strictures imposed by his socio-economic standing, and was not hopeful that he could break free from his current situation. Some IPs expressed a nostalgic yearning for a time when bonds were imagined as enduring and meaningful ties between people:

*Earlier a person who had 100 rupees [USD\$1.06] was a big (rich) person but now nobody cares if a person has 1 crore [USD\$160,668]. Earlier, poor people used to work for food. They were getting food for their work, but people now won't come even if you invite them for food." (Sadanand, 33, farmer)*

*Men in the past were thinking about working hard and earning money. They were living in close relationships with greater understanding. (Hamid, 52, coolie)*



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**Men's nostalgic imagining of the past informed their current views of women. They believed women should be fearful of men and respect them.**

*Men earlier did not send their wives to work outside. Their wives were taking care of them and getting food ready on time. (Gajanan, 33, driver)*

*It is said by our ancestors that women must cook and manage the household work. Apart from that, they are only restricted to labour work in the field. (Dharamveer, 25, tractor driver)*

*Men worked hard in those times. They kept their wives inside the house - they never let them out of their houses and they bought whatever was needed for them. At the time of quarrels, men used to hit their women so they lead their lives with a fear of men in them. But women were good in those days - they respected men. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

*There used to be a lot of respect before. If any woman sees a man coming, she used go inside, and cover her head with the pallu [long drape of the sari which falls behind the shoulder]. In those days, women used to be at home all the time. They were scared of men. My uncle says that there is a lot of difference between his time and the present. (Heman, 25, truck driver)*

*See, in earlier days, women had a lot of respect for men; they did not show their faces to other men except their husbands and they used to cover their faces with the saree when a stranger or elder comes. But now, women show everything. (Mallapa, 28, driver)*

*Earlier, men used to work a lot and they would get less wages and they were not fond of fashion; and they knew that they will get food when they work hard. But now, people are fond of cheating one another. Now people want to earn money without any risk, by doing*

*gambling business. More trust and faith existed then. There was more belief in each other and younger people gave respect to their elders. Nowadays, youth gives less respect, and importantly, no one trusts each other now. (Samir, 43, tailor)*

*Earlier, men used to think about working and about [their] future life. But in today's generation, men only think about love, affairs, having girlfriends. (Mallapa, 28, driver)*

According to the male contacts, then, the precarious work and economic conditions they faced fostered a kind of individualism where they felt disconnected from each other and their environment.

The way in which current masculinity was expressed in the face of transforming labour conditions were underlined by the nostalgic narratives of the past. In recalling the "early days", the IPs spoke of a time when men were "very strong", and "more powerful".

*Men earlier were very strong. They used to carry a lot of weight, had strong muscles and did a lot of exercise, body building and also competing in doing work in the field and weight lifting of sand filled bags. But now, men are competing to attract women. (Omara, 26, construction worker)*

*Men in the past were very much stronger and more powerful. They used to carry a lot of heavy grain bags. But men now cannot do hard work- these people stick to work on computers and machines. (Lakhan, 28, driver)*

Patriarchal conceptions of gender and notions of traditional gender roles provide the basis for male dominance, and legitimise a subordinate view

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of women. The IPs believed that women should be fearful of men, and have respect for them; and that women “in those days” were better than modern day women who “show everything”. This idealised notion of a submissive woman feeds into male behavioural modes which deny women agency in decision making in both the public and private spheres.

### 3.2 Media, Nationalism, Body Image and their Impact on Everyday Masculinities

This section explores how ideas of masculinity at the study sites were culturally represented and reproduced through local cultural norms and practices; and how traditional and modern ideas of masculinity inform current working class masculinities.

#### 3.2.1 Media

The media in India, especially the movie industry, is complicit in enforcing a macho male stereotype which is contrasted with the construction of females as foils to established versions of male heroism. An insight into how particular constructs of masculinity are championed can be gleaned from the controversial film *Vishwaroopam* (Form of God) which was released at the time of the study. The storyline concerns a young Indian woman living in New York with a husband who she plans to leave as she finds him too effeminate. During a screening of the movie in Mudhol the researchers observed that the mainly male audience were voluble in their disdain for the hero’s posturing, wrist flicking and prancing when teaching his dance students at the beginning of the movie. The jeers and laughter quickly faded, and changed to enthusiastic cheers when the same man metamorphosises into a hero who engages in violent combat with terrorists. His masculinity is simultaneously affirmed and redeemed through violence. He is no longer a pathetic weakling. The audience shouted with excitement and approval as what they thought was an affront to masculinity was, in actuality, a farce.

#### 3.2.2 Nationalism

In the same way that male stereotypes are reinforced through the media, constructions of masculinity in India are also linked with concepts of nationalism which are championed in movies. At the time of the research, the men in the study sites had expressed a strong liking for *Kranthiveera Sangolli Rayanna* (Sangolli Rayanna, Warrior), a 2012 movie release, for its patriotic themes. The film depicts Sangolli Rayanna, the prominent freedom fighter from Karnataka, in a bloody and violent



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battle against the British colonial forces. Some IPs described Sangolli Rayanna as the “protector of the poor”, a “patriot” who “dedicated his life” for the nation. Although the war took place in the 1800s, the event still resonates in the everyday lives of men. In Chikkur village, a 20 year old man outlined his plan of entering the military service to the researchers. He used the metaphor of “mother” to describe India, a country that has given him “health, wealth, food, land and property”; so it was only fitting that he risks his own life to guard it, stating that “[the] nation protected me so I will protect the nation”.

Masculinity was also expressed as a sense of duty to the state in chauvinistic terms. Under the recent rule of the Bharatiya Janata Party, right-wing conservatism has fuelled aggressive chauvinistic attachment to the ideal of a Hindu state, and sharpened anti-foreigner sentiments. This was expressed directly to the research team when it stopped in the village of Tanda, a small farming community. A man who happened to be at the same shop as the team thought that one of the researchers was a terrorist. He stated his patriotism fiercely, claiming that he would kill anyone who he suspected would pose a threat to his country. Whether this was bravado fuelled by alcohol, or was a sentiment which stemmed from a deep rooted sense of patriotism, the public proclamation of devotion to the nation was clear (the impression of being under terrorist attack was very real at the time due to the bombings in Hyderabad<sup>2</sup>). The sense of being under threat further reinforced the construction of ‘Indian-ness’ against ‘the other’. Unlike non-Indian men, the man claimed that the strength of Indian men came from drinking their local beers, eating *roti* (unleavened bread) and working hard on the land. The narrative of nationalism among these men is clearly rooted in chauvinism of the male working class.

#### 3.2.3 Body Image

The men who took part in the study subscribed to certain concepts of how masculinity is physically expressed. This was illustrated during a body building show which took place in Mudhol one evening during the research period. A parking lot was transformed into an arena where contestants rippled their muscles under the spotlight to the cheers of the predominantly male spectators, numbering about 1000. This was an annual event to raise awareness of the progress made by the lower caste community in their fight against discrimination. The men would perform a routine for 30 seconds to their music of choice playing in the

<sup>2</sup> Two bomb blasts in Hyderabad killed 17 people and injured 119 people on the 21 February 2013.

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background, and from the volume of cheers from the spectators, one could judge that they preferred the overtly masculine physique with bulging, bronzed muscles. The strength of their feedback even caused contestants who were not up to par with their more muscled counterparts to slink back into the shadows.

The aversion expressed for men who did not conform to the behaviour nor looks of accepted masculinity were clearly demonstrated in other instances. In one case, the researchers observed that a man was chided by his friends for shaving his moustache and “acting like a woman”. Calling him a *Chakka* (sissy), they made fun of the fact that he was soft-spoken and shy. Such terms were often deployed as mechanisms to reaffirm a man’s sense of masculinity and simultaneously denounce other men who did not conform to their gender roles.

With the change from the agrarian to the modern economy, and the predominance of stereotypes perpetrated by Bollywood, it would appear that an ironic dilemma presented itself to the working class man. While masculinity was defined through their toiling on the land under the sun, it also had to accommodate the more modern conception that being handsome also necessitated being ‘fair’. Even boys between the ages of eight to 12 expressed a desire to be fair complexioned. This was underscored by a trip to the barber in Chichikandi village where posters of men with dyed hair promoting skin whitening cosmetic procedures dominated the walls. Hansaraj, one of the barbers present, stressed that one could judge a man’s intelligence and respectability from his physical appearance. A man who knew how to take care of himself, and who maintained his appearance, symbolised respect not only for others but himself. It was also a way to ensure that partners do not stray. As noted by an IP:

*Women get impressed when we wear good clothes. If we wear filthy clothes, they won’t talk to us - they won’t love us. (Kulik, 28, driver)*

In the context of the growing market economy, the social and consumption patterns of men have changed dramatically. The working class men felt the pressures of having to attain the middle/upper class trappings of the successful male.

**Men who did not have the accepted 'masculine' look or behaviour were denounced.**

*If a man doesn't act like a man, he will be called a Chakka. Of course he is a Chakka. Acting like a woman, doing what women do, like washing clothes, dishwashing. These are not a man's job. There is a boy in my street who is always with women- he washes clothes, cleans vessels. Is he a man? Tell me.” (Charan, 30, coolie)*

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The ability to spend was a common narrative among the men. They related the value of their labour to the purchase of commodities to satisfy the needs of others and their own. They strived to achieve the status of an upwardly mobile man.

*He must have a vehicle, mobile, wear sunglasses, and dress well. Then he looks handsome. (Kulik, 28, driver)*

In addition to the pressures of complying with approved physical masculine ideals, these working class men also valued the image of the generous male as pithily noted by Gagan, a motor mechanic - *“a real man is generous with his money and spends it on drinking, his friends, his lover and family.”* In general, the idea of consumerism (or rather the ability to spend) was a common narrative during informal discussions with the IPs and their colleagues. They related the value of their labour to the purchase of commodities that could satisfy their own needs as well as the needs of others. In this way, they strived to achieve the status of an upwardly mobile man.

### 3.3 Relationships

The following section provides an overview of the study’s findings on the dynamics of relationships between the FSWs and their IPs. The FSWs were mainly *Devadasis*. We explore how relationships are articulated as temporary ties in the context of the market economy, and relatedly, the different mechanisms of how violence is enacted as a form of control and act of intimacy. In addition, we analyse the men’s narratives of the ideal woman and the ways in which these narratives modulate their feelings towards their lovers.

#### 3.3.1 Fleeting Relationships

In the context of increasing casualisation of labour<sup>32</sup> and migration<sup>39</sup>, where men experienced a growing sense of alienation from their environment, the relationship with their lovers provided a sexual and emotional outlet they did not experience at home. The men enjoyed the physical benefits of sex as well as confiding in their lovers.

*I will expect sexual pleasure from her; we can have sexual pleasure together. She gives me pleasure. She sleeps with me whenever I want (and) that gives me so much joy. She talks to me nicely. I can share my feelings with her and she also shares her feelings with me. (Omkara, 26, construction worker)*

*See, we watch porn clips on the mobile and we can practice such acts which we cannot do with the wife. My lover must satisfy me - she must give me the pleasures that I desire and want...I can’t ask my wife to lick my penis and practice different acts of sex, like bending over and spreading out her legs for fucking. (Mallapa, 28, driver)*

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**Men viewed the relationship with their lovers as expendable and based on the material support provided to them.**

*We feel free to have sex with our lovers. She is like an outsider even if she is very much close to me. We can stop talking with lovers, but we can't live without talking to our wives because we both are interdependent in the family. We both have to interact. We can give up lovers, but we can't give up wives. (Sadanand, 33, farmer)*

*There is a saying: "wife lasts till the end and prostitute lasts while you have money." Like a dead body in the grave, money given to the prostitute will never come back to you. (Heman, 25, truck driver)*

In general, most of the men viewed their relationships with lovers as more fleeting and physical, and as a result felt less obligated to them. For most, relationships with FSWs were born out of sexual needs. Men enjoyed a carefree relationship with FSWs, who they felt were more understanding than their wives. However, men did not have the same familial obligation to their lovers as their wives, and viewed their relationship with their lovers as less stable and committed.

*If my wife goes against me, there are many choices to resolve the conflict. Elders, members from both the families, neighbours and relatives will gather and find out the reason for the conflict and later, the spouses will come to a consensus. But it is different for lovers because it is a hidden relationship and it is like a flower. We can remove it any time when we don't want it. I got married to my wife in front of society. I have the right to ask anything of my wife but I don't have any rights on my lover. (Omkara, 26, construction worker)*

Moreover, according to some IPs, lovers have no reason to be in a relationship with a man who could not support them materially, which in turn limited any long term prospects they had with their lovers.

*I must expect everything from my wife. I cannot expect from my lover that which I expect from my wife because my wife is ultimate and everything. My wife takes care of me and she will help me when I am in trouble. If I am lost and suffering from financial problems, she will get money from her parents and support me, but I cannot expect this from my lover. She says "if you are not there, I will find someone else - get lost". (Gajanan, 33, driver)*

*If we provide for them or if we meet their needs, they won't look at other persons. If we are not able to meet their needs, then automatically she begins to get clients. (Sadanand, 33, farmer)*

*See, the wife is ultimate. If I die tomorrow, my wife will cry and she has the right. But a Devadasi will just find another person. The wife does not care about money; she only has love for us. It is a formal relationship bound in the presence of many people. (Lakhan, 28, driver)*

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The men viewed the family as an institution that provided a sense of emotional and physical stability, which they could turn to even when their lovers left them. In contrast to their relationships with their wives, men were well aware that the extent of material support they provided to their lovers dictated the level of physical and emotional intimacy they shared with them.

However, the lovers of these men did not share this view that intimacy was contingent on material benefits. On the contrary, in a discussion

**Lovers of the men disagreed that intimacy in their relationships was contingent on material benefits and described these relationships as one sided.**

*He will torture us a lot. He is a liar. He will be with us, with his wife and if he finds some other attractive woman, he will go behind her. We love him, we won't leave him. That's why we won't tell him anything even if he beats us. (Sneh, 29, peer educator/sex worker)*

*They will blame us using vulgar language; he won't treat us as his wife. He will scold us by saying 'you are a bitch', 'you sleep with other persons'. If we speak about his wife, he will beat us, he will get angry and ask us "how dare you compare yourself to my wife?" (Puja, 30, peer educator/sex worker)*

*We treat him (IP) more than a husband. We give him sexual satisfaction and do as he pleases, but he never speaks with us when he is with his family members. (Nada, 25, peer educator/sex worker)*

with Oditi, a *Devadasi* and volunteer at *Chaitanya Mahila Sangha* (a sex worker collective), she described how the relationships of FSWs and IPs tended to be one sided. According to her, *Devadasis* had more faith in their IPs, but the IPs would change partners after a few years out of boredom, and search for someone younger. The construct of the prostitute who lives in the shadows of the monolith of the institution of the family facilitates their abuse at the hands of their IPs. Their ties are not formal and binding, as articulated on a T-shirt worn by a waiter in Mudhol: "Girlfriends are like medicine – They have expiry dates".

#### 3.3.2. Violence in the Market Economy

Although men view relationships with *Devadasis* as an escape from their precarious labour conditions, it also added to their existing financial burdens. Men in general felt the constant stress over their inability to support their family through wage labour or lack of employment prospects. In addition to supporting their own families, the IPs had to also provide financial support to their lovers, which added another layer of stress.

*She also enquires with my boss how much I earned. If she came to*



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**The financial and emotional burden of caring for both lover and wife, along with pressures of work, contributed to stress and violence in men's relationship with their lovers.**

*Life runs on money. For everything, we need money. For school fees, for family maintenance. (Sadanand, 33, farmer)*

*My lover always waits for money; she makes plans to get money from me. She asks me money for various things: like thousand, two thousand for rations and other expenses. I will ask her to manage it from her family members, but she wants money from me. I lost most of my money to her. (Quamar, 30, band master/painter)*

*Sometimes we will be very busy in our family work and cannot go to the lover's house. If we go to the lover's house after 8 or 15 days, she starts shouting and she says I never care about her. She won't stop even if I tell the reason why I was not able to go, and that makes me angry and will lead me to hit her. (Prasham, 36, factory labourer)*

*know that I am spending money on small things, she will ask me. (Rahul, 25, construction worker)*

*She is always in need of something. She asks me to get something when I go to her house. She never stops demanding. (Lakhan, 28, driver)*

*She will ask – 'why didn't you give money?' - and I will argue – 'why did you get into such bad habits?' These are the reasons [we fight]. (Heman, 25, truck driver)*

Juggling work and family made it difficult for IPs to spend time with their lovers, which added more stress to their relationships, which in turn would lead to fights. The financial and emotional burden of caring for both lover and wife, along with the pressures of work, were described as contributing factors to stress and violence in their relationships with their lovers.

Among working class or rural families, the women tended to work inside the homes taking care of their children while the men would work as wage labourers in fields or in towns. Unlike the landlords who owned large tracts of land,

small landholders do not make enough to support their families. As a result, these men would seek work outside their villages. It was not uncommon to work simultaneously as an agricultural labourer, auto-rickshaw driver, land cutter, bus driver, courier, and so on. The multiplicity of their work had a common denominator – these were all poorly paid jobs, some of which were also dangerous. The next section will further demonstrate how the exploitation men experienced at work perpetuates intimate partner violence.

#### 3.3.3. Violence: A Form of Control

Given the economic situation where job security is non-existent, and where these men had little or no control over their future job prospects, the one area where they could wield any influence is in their private lives. Violence against women was a simple way to reassert control in their private domains. The following proverbs used by the IPs illustrate how violence keeps women in line.

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*We can think and treat her like an animal because animals (buffalo) will eat wherever it finds food. So we have to stop it by hitting.*

*(Dharamveer, 25, tractor driver)*

#### **Violence against women was a way to:**

- **Assert control**

*There are some rules our ancestors used to declare: "a wife must be scolded and an ox must be hit at every corner of the field it goes." When we beat an ox, it will go in the right line. The same goes for a wife. She must be scolded and beaten sometimes, then she will be in our control and listen to us. Otherwise she will do whatever comes to her mind. She will go in the wrong way. (Neeraf, 45, farmer)*

- **Correct women's transgressions and lack of obedience**

*If we beat her when she is talking to other men, then she will realise that I will get angry when she talks to other men; and she won't repeat it again as she will think that I am very strict in that matter. If I do not beat her at that time, she will continue talking to everyone with no fear. (Lakhan, 28, driver)*

- **Manipulate relationships between lovers and wives to maintain male dominance**

*Yes, we do fight with the wife. Actually, if the relationship with the wife is good, then we fight with the lover. If the relationship is good with the lover, then we fight with the wife. It is a technique we use. If we are quiet, they will become arrogant. We spend a few days with the lover and a few days with the wife. If they both have a good understanding, then there is no problem. (Samir, 43, tailor)*

- **Maintain men's public image as being in control of his household and family**

*If we don't beat them, the mistakes done by women will become visible and then the public will talk about me and question my manhood. (Kiranmay, 24, daily wage labourer/farmer)*

*There is a proverb we use: "a kick for a donkey and words for a human". It means that a donkey will understand when it is hit, but a person understands with the words. Okay, I will wait and see. If she doesn't listen to me, I will beat her.*

*(Samir, 43, tailor)*

*[Women are] like donkeys [they need to] get beaten [to] be convinced. Men can understand words, but donkeys cannot understand words. It needs to be hit.*

*(Durgappa, 28, driver)*

In many of the proverbs men described, women were analogous to animals, which further justified men's control over their partners and, in turn, subjected the women to violence by their partners. Based on the premise of control, abuse was described as a method to correct women's transgressions and lack of obedience:

*We must hit her. She will not repeat the same mistakes when she gets beaten. If we do not beat her when she does wrong things, she will not be scared and not be in our control. In the future, she won't listen to us. (Jagathi, 33, driver/self-employee)*

*She might do wrong things when she is not beaten up by her husband. She must have at least a minimum range of fear of her husband. For that, he has to beat her but being a husband, he should not beat her up to a serious level (injury level). (Banu, 31, electrician)*

*When she will have a lot of leisure time, she might think: my husband won't do anything and I can be the way I want. So if we keep hitting them, they will be on track. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

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In addition, violence was also described as a technique of manipulating relationships between their wives and lovers in order to maintain male dominance.

In keeping with the norms of the short term nature of the relationship, the IPs were anxious if they felt that their lovers had developed too intense feelings for them and they resorted to violence as a way to temper these emotions. When asked what would happen if men stopped beating their lovers, an IP stated:

*Then they will love us more, they start doing love more. We cannot tolerate it if they love (us) more. (Samir, 43, tailor)*

These narratives show how fear and violence are both used as tactics to subjugate and keep women in line while simultaneously relegating them to their acceptable roles. The patriarchal ideologies rooted in these responses reflect women's subordination in a society which prevents them from challenging the systematic violence they experience.

Paradoxically, while these men had a common understanding of violence as a necessary element in their relationships, they preferred to keep that aspect hidden from public view. Ironically, they desired social respectability and understood that their image would be tarnished if society saw them as women beaters.

*See, we should not fight publicly. If she does a wrong thing, I can beat her inside the house by locking the door and making sure no one knows that I beat my wife. If the public knows, then we won't be respected. We must keep the wife under control by gestures. If we widen our eyes, she must go inside. We make sure she understands our expressions. (Hamid, 52, coolie)*

Violence was used privately not only to keep women in line, but also to maintain men's public image as the person in control of his household and family.

Despite the transient nature of their relationships, some men stated that they loved their lovers as much as their wives, if not more. This was often expressed in the form of satisfying their lover's material needs.

*I wish her a good life. She must live a good life. She should not see other men. I ask her not to see other persons and ask her to ask me for what she wants. I can meet her needs by taking loans from others when I don't have money. I also ask her to help me when I am in need, but she should not have contact with many people. (Sadanand, 33, farmer)*



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*I provide what she asks. If she asks for a saree, I will provide it to her and whatever else she wants. I am involved in her joys and sorrows, and I even support her in her work. I will provide all kinds of support to her. (Banu, 31, electrician)*

*If she wants anything, I buy it. If she has a problem, I help her. And if her children want any clothes for school, I will provide it. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

*If she has any financial problems, I help her financially. If she has any personal problems, we try to solve it together. Any kind of problem... I will be part of it and try to solve it. (Heman, 25, truck driver)*

*Taking her outside to movies, making her enjoy, giving treats, taking her to restaurants, providing clothes...She makes me happier when I make her happy by spending a lot of money on her. I do not spend such money on my wife. I give more importance to my lover than my wife. (Samir, 43, tailor)*

*Yes, we have to respect her too; we should bear the expenses of her family, doing marriages of her kids because she is a Devadasi. I am like a husband to her. We have to support her financially, otherwise she may find another man who fulfils her needs. (Lakhan, 28, driver)*

*I will provide her whatever she wants. I will look after family expenses. I will take her to the market by bike. (Dharamveer, 25, tractor driver)*

*I will give some money to her, and financially help her to have a small shop for her livelihood. (Prasham, 36, factory labourer)*

The act of providing material support was a way in which the IPs consolidated their relationships, and in turn, justified the violence meted out to their partners.

*I was there to provide everything she wants - like dress money - then she has to listen me and obey what I say. As I said, you know earlier, she has to obey me because I love her, I will give money to her, more money than my wife. She is only for me. She is supposed to have sex only with me, not with many. I have the right because I meet her needs. (Charan, 30, coolie)*

*I don't like her doing prostitution. I take care of her expenses, and get her whatever she asks for. If she does it when I am not there, then I will hit her. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

*She will be instructed beforehand not to speak to strangers, not to get*

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#### For men, providing material support to their lovers:

##### ● Justified the violence in their relationship

*I say to her, 'what do you lack?' - I work and provide everything, and make sure that you lack nothing. You get food, clothes and everything. Then what right do you have to argue with me? You talk back to me when I am tortured, when I am drunk or under the influence of alcohol. Shut up/ keep quiet! (Banu, 31, electrician)*

*I have the right to hit her and even kill her. Why else would I bear the expense and look after her? We can have any kind of sex at any time with her. (Lakhan, 28, driver)*

*She has to obey me. She should not go to others, or go out for prostitution, when I take care of her needs, and she should be mine. She should wait for me. Sex - she should have sex in all the ways I want. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

##### ● Enhanced their expectations from and entitlement over their lovers

*Yes, I have told her. Once I was not able to find her so I went searching for her at midnight and I found her speaking with someone. Then I asked her who he is. She replied - he is my brother. Immediately I beat her and after two days I have taken her to hospital for treatment. (Akash, 33, handloom weaver)*

*Suspicion is very dangerous, we can beat her if she talks to another person. If we find her with another person, conflict occurs and we can beat her. (Ibhya, 50, Farmer)*

*into any bad habits. We will be giving her enough money for her daily bread. Even then, if she does anything like that, then she will be beaten. (Heman, 25, truck driver)*

Paradoxically, there were IPs who implied they had no rights over their lovers:

*I can beat my wife but I cannot beat my lover because she is a Devadasi, and she can question why I did not marry her in the presence of people. It is a hidden relationship. (Dharamveer, 35, tractor driver)*

Although these men suggested that they had no authority over their lovers because they were not married to them, their financial support enhanced their sense of expectation and entitlement over their lovers, which further enforced limitations on the women's agency and ability to navigate and negotiate their partnership. This is demonstrated by the IPs' sense of possessiveness over their lovers, and persistent use of violence to express their jealousies.

*If she is found talking with someone, standing and chatting with any other person, then we can beat her. (Gagan, 48, motor mechanic)*

*But sometimes, the problem starts with me because I question her if she gets a phone call. I will say to her - how many calls you might have got during my absence? (Hamid, 52, Coolie)*

The women clearly felt that they were being restricted, and were unhappy over being unfairly accused.

*He beats me if I go anywhere without his permission. He says - if you go without any permission, I will see you. (Veda, 28, peer educator/sex worker)*

*Our duty is spending money on them, keeping them happy, though we get blamed behind [our backs]. (Giva, 32, sex worker/wage labourer)*

In general, women in the FGDs stated that men were highly controlling

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and suspicious - monitoring their lovers' mobile phone calls, SMSes, how they dressed, and where they went. In a horrific incident that took place in Jamkhandi, a *Devadasi* received a fatal wound to her inner thigh after dodging a stab to her genital region by her IP who suspected her of cheating. As is normally the case, she had chosen to stay on with her IP even after she had pressed charges against him for violence earlier.

The responses of the *Devadasis* in an FGD in the village of Hebbal revealed how labour relations influenced women's dependence on men. One of the women said that because men's labour was more valued, they earned more and women had to therefore be economically dependent on men.

This was echoed by an IP:

*Living in the village...most of the women depend upon men's earnings. Men work outside, and then women have to listen to men, obey what they say... Women are in more need of men. She cannot achieve anything without the support of men. (Samir, 43, tailor)*

The dynamics of the relationship between men and women were akin to the master-slave bond, where the men provide money for women to feed the family in exchange for the subservience of the women who were economically dependent on them. Men's status in society and dominance over women was conferred by the value placed on their work, and productivity associated with their physical labour. In turn, women were viewed as men's chattels and the FSWs were expected to fulfil the sexual desires of their lovers.

*I like my lover because my lover allows me to have any kind of sex, whereas my wife will not agree. Because she gives me more pleasure, I love and spend more money on my lover than my wife. I watch porn clips on the mobile and she is willing to practice the scenes with me. (Charan, 30, coolie)*

*If I drink, she won't let me have sex. It is fine in my lover's place to drink and have sex, but not at home. (Dhaval, 23, construction worker)*

#### 3.3.4. Violence: A Contested Act of Intimacy

The relationships, which the IPs had with their lovers, were highly conflicted. Although the IPs viewed their relationships with their lovers as temporary, they still expressed a deep affection for them, which they used to justify their violence.

*We can beat them if we become very close to them. We can beat*

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**Men felt women deserved violence as they had affection for them, and also because women lacked intelligence.**

*I feel it is okay to hit lovers. My lover cares about me more than my wife because sometimes my wife will not take care of me and I have to eat by myself, get water by myself but my lover is not like that. She cares a lot - she pours a lot of love on me. And when she doesn't care for me, she doesn't talk to me nicely, then I can beat her because I assume there is something wrong with her - that's why she is not caring for me. (Neeraf, 45, farmer)*

*I recall all the things I did for her. I wished I could kill her. Once I took her to a bridge to kill her. We fought a lot, but now we are very fine. I will beat her if she goes against me, and she also will scold me and ask me not to come to the house. But she calls me the next morning. She can't live without me, and I can't live without her. I want to inform her before I go anywhere, and she also must get my permission if she wants to go somewhere. (Kiranmay, 24, daily wage labourer/ farmer)*

*Fights start with women, because of their talk, [and] poor knowledge. "Intelligence of women lies beneath the knee". They are less educated - because of their improper communication, fights happen. [However], educated women are more arrogant because they are aware about laws, whereas uneducated women are quiet even after being beaten. Women's behaviour leads to fights. (Charan, 30, coolie)*

*them when we have the right to do so. Some men pay and have sex by using condoms, but those who become intimate partners and lovers will not use condoms. The (IP) has the right to beat their Devadasi. (Gagan, 48, motor mechanic)*

*He hits when he gets more love for her and even he hits when he gets more angry with her...There is no wrong if he beats with love. (Waseem, 45, waiter)*

*I treat my lover as my wife, and I will beat if she does any wrong deed when she makes me angry. (Gajanan, 33, driver)*

*See, when a man loves a woman with dedication, he has the right because he loves her more than his life. He never cares about his property and prestige when he wants her. Then she has to be faithful to him and must love him sincerely. But if she goes behind to another man and cheats on him, she has to be punished. (Gagan, 48, motor mechanic)*

Similarly, in an FGD conducted with FSWs, some of the women came to believe that their partner's act of violence was an expression of love: "he hits me because he loves me" was a common statement. Another woman compared violence to getting "showered with flowers". This co-dependent relationship that the IPs and their lovers have with each other also fostered a relationship where violence was not only condoned, but accepted as an expression of love.

Some IPs also described violence as a way to maintain their relationships. Although the men expressed remorse for beating their partners, they still felt it was necessary and for women's betterment due to their lack of intelligence.

*I don't feel it is good - though we have to beat them when they do wrong things. Later [I] feel bad and regret why I should beat her because we love with our heart. (Jagathi, 33, driver/ self-employed)*

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*They [women] are less educated - because of their improper communication, fights happen. [However], educated women are more arrogant because they are aware about laws, whereas uneducated women are quiet even after being beaten. Women's behaviour leads to fights. (Charan, 30, coolie)*

In an FGD, Devadasis also echoed similar sentiments about themselves:

*Wherever we go, people see us as inferior. They say that the intelligence of women lies beneath the knee, that men will be wiser. They roam outside, they are knowledgeable. (Nila, 33, sex worker)*

Here, the claims against women's intelligence were often counterintuitive: women were viewed as intellectually inferior to men yet arrogant if they were educated. Not only were restrictions placed on the women's behaviour but also on the role they could occupy in society.

However, violence is not only isolated to lovers, but also meted out to the wives if they did not fulfil their domestic duties.

*The wife starts it [violence], because she makes him angry when he comes after drinking or it [violence] comes from tension from outside. She doesn't serve him food properly, speaks harshly so that makes the man angry and leads to a fight...He can beat her if she keeps on doing the same mistake... (Sadanand, 33, farmer)*

*If she treats her husband as god, and the husband as everything and will meet the needs of her husband; if she fulfils the desires of the husband then the husband should not beat her. It is wrong to beat her because she provided what he wants. If she doesn't co-operate with him, she deserves to be beaten, because he gets tense and starts to drink. Because of this, there will be desperation and disappointment. It may lead to divorces, broken families. It impacts children. (Abra, 28, bank peon)*

*Mistakes are having sexual desire for other men, causing delays in giving food when we work on the land. Husbands will be hungry during work time and he will hit his wife with wood or by hand. (Gagan, 48, motor mechanic)*

Violence is used to maintain the patriarchal family household and because the wife is seen as the property of the men, even fathers-in-law have the right to beat the women.

*A few days ago, my dad was about to beat my wife because she was scolding me and also disrespecting my dad. Then he got angry and asked her to behave properly. My dad and I have the right to beat her.*



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*She must respect men who are in the family. She is the material we brought to our home, so all we have the right to beat her. (Charan, 30, coolie)*

In much the same way that FSWs have to deal with violence in their relationships with these men, their wives are also at risk of being beaten when they fail to fulfil their domestic duties in accordance with the wishes of their husbands. Unfortunately, the category of IP is a contentious term that overlooks men's relationships with their wives and how they are also affected by intimate partner violence.

#### 3.3.5. The Ideal Woman

The IPs' narratives indicate that men developed a deeper bond with their lovers if they displayed what they believed to be virtuous behaviour - subservience, obedience, and docility:

*My relationship with the lover is like that of family and she is more than my wife. I don't know how you think, but for me, I feel that my lover likes me and cares for me more than my wife. You know what a wife does. A wife only gives water to wash when we come from outside, but my lover not only gives water, she goes beyond it. She cleans my legs with her hands and shows more love to me. That is her technique. She does all those things, uses all techniques to make us love her more and we fall in love with her. That will inspire us to have more love for lovers than for wives, and we become interested to take her outside, provide everything she asks for. Feelings of having enjoyment with our lovers will develop. (Samir, 43, tailor)*

*Because of her, I am on the right path today and she poured love into my life. She is everything to me. I treat her as my own wife. She calls me when I am late home, which even my wife doesn't do. She takes more care of me than my wife. (Rahul, 25, construction worker)*

As illustrated, in comparison to their wives, lovers tended to put more effort into their relationship with their IPs. The men also came to develop the same expectations of their lovers as they did of their wives. An IP poignantly describes this in the following excerpts:

*She must look after me well, talk to me. I wish she is always happy with me. I want to live longer and have a good relationship with her. There is still a lot to do. Weddings of her children..... I want to be called 'father' during the weddings. They should accept me as their father and I want to make the wedding as grand as their own father (would do) and take care of the guests who come to the*

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wedding....make all the arrangements. I (want to) have the complete responsibility of it. (Hamid, 52, coolie)

I treat her as my own wife. Sometimes I go late at night and she feeds me at that time. I cannot eat if I am alone, but I can eat well when she feeds me. I will support her during issues regarding property disputes. I wish she would not be in trouble in any way. Nobody should disturb her. (Hamid, 52, coolie)

[Women] should not spoil the vagina for the sake of bread (food). A man who comes to have sex and goes, may not come back the next day. If she gives good company, then we will take care of her. Being an intimate partner, we are ready to sell our property for her. But this is not done by clients. They will give money for shots (sex). (Hamid, 52, coolie)

Obedience, subservience, and ability to meet all the needs of the men are viewed as necessary behaviours, from both lovers and their wives, in order to satisfy the men, and avoid being beaten.

#### **The construct of the ideal woman does not differ substantially if applied to either the men's lovers or their wives.**

It is women's responsibility to speak nicely and to listen to his stories when a man comes from outside. She has to behave gently and cook what he likes, then no fights happen between spouses. When she starts screaming at him as soon as he enters the home, automatically it makes him angry and it leads to a fight. Because I am a man, I work; I manage the family with my hard earned money. She has just to do and obey what I say. She has to cook if I provide food - other than that, she should be quiet. (Charan, 30, coolie)

If she doesn't take care of the children, keep the house clean, co-operate with me in sex, speak against me or take care of my parent, then I have a reason to beat her (Banu, 31, electrician)

When she doesn't agree to sleep with me when I am drunk, I can beat her and when she goes against me, not listen to me, then I can beat her. (Gajanan, 33, driver)

#### **3.3.6. More than just Lovers**

From the perspective of the men, the relationships were not based solely on sexual satisfaction but also on a deep emotional love and concern for their partner, which set them apart from regular clients. In some of the relationships, *Devadasis* were placed on the same pedestal if not higher than the wives. Some of the men genuinely wanted to pursue a marriage with a *Devadasi*; however, because of the *Devadasi*

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system and protest from the women's family, marriage was not viable option.

One IP stated:

*She wanted to marry me - she proposed this once. Then I told her, 'Okay, I will ask your parents'. I sent my sister to discuss the matter with her parents. When my sister went and discussed the matter with her parents, they rejected it and they said that she is a dedicated Yellamma (Devadasi), so she cannot be married. Then I decided to only have sex with her by paying money. (Quamar, 30, bandmaster/painter)*

One IP is himself the child of a *Devadasi*, and despite meeting his own *Devadasi* lover when they were in high school, he married another woman to ensure his mother was cared for. However, he continues to maintain a loving relationship with his *Devadasi*. In a conversation with him in Rabkavi Banhatti, he described how he involved his lover in all his decision making processes and how she supported him when he needed.

*We live with co-operation. I believe she will live with me until the end of life because we love and like each other. I wanted to marry her but it cannot happen because she is a Devadasi. So I have my own life, as she has her own life; but we support each other at all times. (Jagathi, 33, driver/self-employed)*

There were also extreme cases where IPs had threatened to take their own lives after their lovers refused to take them back following a break up. In one case, an IP had wielded a knife in the workplace of his lover after she broke up with him. He had to be physically restrained, but managed to cut himself and was hospitalised. This incident highlights the fact that *Devadasis* were not merely fulfilling the men's sexual desires, but that they were also intimately connected in other ways.

However, the deep attachment with their lovers was often expressed in terms of satisfying them sexually to maintain their relationships:

*I wanted to have sex with her, to satisfy her so that she does not feel like seeing another person. I do not want her to see another person. (Gagan, 48, motor mechanic)*

*Men must work, earn money and look after family members, meet their needs. He must make the woman sexually satisfied, otherwise she will find another man to fulfil that need. Men have a very important role to play. (Ijay, 35, hotel server)*



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#### 3.4. Community and Family Role pertaining to IPV

Violence against women was prevalent in many of the relationships. The community, and by extension the society around them, played an important role in how violence was enacted within relationships:

*It's not a big deal. It is very common for a man [in the community] to beat a woman and for the man to hit a woman when he is angry.*  
(Kulik, 28, driver)

*Other men in the community beat their wives because women do not know how to talk. They are not far-sighted. They just say whatever comes out of their mouths without thinking of the consequence. So this is the main reason why they must get hit.* (Samir, 43, tailor)

Although most men claim that others do not influence their behaviour towards their partners, the influence of patriarchal norms that

perpetuated subordination and violence against women made it common for men in the community to beat their wives and lovers. It is interesting to note that the community members do not condone violence against women not because the act is illegal or inhumane, but because the women who get badly beaten up will not be able to perform their domestic duties:

*Neighbours say that 'beating a wife is equal to beating a dog' because if something goes wrong, he himself has to take her to hospital and if she goes to her parent's house, then who will cook and will take care of children?*  
(Waseem, 45, waiter)

There were also strong beliefs that a man's honour was conditional upon women's subservience and relegation to the domestic realm. Men generally had strong traditional and patriarchal beliefs about women's roles:

*Women live at home, and men can go anywhere. No one questions us even if we come home late; but it is extremely different for women. We question them if they leave the home and come back late. There is a rule that women must be at home and listen to men.* (Prasham, 36, factory labourer)

#### **Patriarchal gender norms about women's subservience and roles influenced men's violence against women.**

*Women must be under control, and they should be restricted to household work only; not for other work. They should not come to public places where we spend time with our friends; my dignity will be reduced if she goes there.*  
(Dharamveer, 25, tractor driver)

*They must be very decent and behave respectfully. They should not go where we don't want them to go, and they should wear very decent dresses, and along with that, listen to the elders in the family. They should not be busy on the phone most of the time.* (Prasham, 36, factory labourer)

*The woman must obey him, because she is a woman. See, I am a married person although I have an affair with a Devadasi for six years. She is my keep and she is supposed to listen to me. We rule over them by power - we don't bend (listen or respect) to her. That's why we have more value in the society.* (Lakhan, 28, driver)

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Paradoxically, narratives of women as sexually deviant were commonly invoked:

*If men have sexual desires, women have them three times more.  
(Akash, 33, handloom weaver)*

*Devadasis who are involved in prostitution won't get respect in society and people who respect woman also won't respect them because of [Devadasis]. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

*[Devadasis] are horny, we have to have sex with them until we get married, and we should stop having sex with them after marriage.  
(Lakhan, 28, driver)*

As illustrated, in the context of the capitalist caste based system, the men reproduced the hierarchies and power dynamics they faced at work in their own private relationships. The ideal traditional women placed women who did not meet men's domestic expectations at risk whereas the sexually voracious women justified men's sexual exploitation and abuse of women.

The position of women as a lower, troublesome entity is cemented from birth. In a discussion with an IP, he provided the following analogy:

*If a female child is born, it is equal to a new disease. From the day she is born, we have to take care of her, bear her expenses for marriage, and make sure she does not bring us shame. If she takes the wrong path, no one will marry her and she will become a burden. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

This is contrasted with the birth of a baby boy:

*There won't be any tension if a boy child is born. He will take care of himself, he will earn and eat, and if he gets into any bad habits he can take care of it as he is a boy. If a girl does the same, then what kind of a girl is she? She gets a bad name. Giving birth to a boy child is a matter of pride in this society. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

In the same way that wives and lovers have to be beaten to submission, daughters are to be taught how to behave.

*If she gets into any affair or goes in a wrong way, then it's a matter of shame for us in the society, so we have watch over her before she gets married... We have to hit her so that she will be scared and not go the wrong way. We have to keep questioning her. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

As illustrated above, violence is inflicted from early on in women's lives to control their behaviour. Whether wives, daughters or lovers, females

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were made to understand that violence remains the eloquent language of coercion. What is noteworthy is how prevalent violence was in the community and how this was shaped by patriarchal views of women as subordinate and inferior in relation to men.

### 3.5. Alcohol

It was common for men in Mudhol to return home highly intoxicated to their families. For men, alcohol provided an escape from the struggles of everyday life. Some men noted that drinking was necessitated out of stress from the long hours of physical, manual labour and not from their relationships.

*I drink because of tension. Actually I am a driver, and will get tired of long driving. Driving creates body pain. (Kulik, 28, driver)*

According to one IP, the increase in alcohol consumption was tied to economic development:

*There was less payment in earlier times. The increase in the salary and value of money have ruined the times now. When the sun comes down, everyone wants alcohol. (Waseem, 45, waiter)*

Moreover, the stress from work is also carried into their home life, which further contributed to their drinking and violence against their partners.

*[Fights] happen related to drink (alcohol). My wife doesn't give me sexual pleasure, doesn't co-operate with me for sex, so it leads to fights. (Abra, 28, bank peon)*

*When we are drunk and under the influence of alcohol, we are unable to think about the consequences of the quarrel in this condition. Most of the fights happen when we are drunk. (Gagan, 48, motor mechanic)*

*It cannot be said that the fight happens because of alcohol, but we will get tense when we are drunk and if she says something at that time, I will get angry very quickly and it makes me fight with her. Alcohol is the reason why one remembers the bad things that happened between us earlier, and because of it, I get angry quickly, and it leads to fights. (Neeraf, 45, farmer)*

*After a full intake of alcohol, I go home and she starts scolding me by using bad words and sometimes she has said "you stay with that prostitute". Then I got very angry and hit her very badly with the water pipe. Once I have also broken her hand. (Akash, 33, handloom weaver).*

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As illustrated, IPs were quick to anger under the influence of alcohol, and their partners became vulnerable to violence if they criticised their drinking or failed to meet their sexual demands.

#### 3.6. Reactions to the Law

Instead of viewing the law as a protector of people's rights, some men saw it more as a nuisance. The IPs described the law as a disturbance to family dynamics when abuse is reported to the police.

##### **Men felt that the law discriminated against them and disturbed the family dynamics.**

*Here women have more value. We cannot say anything to women because in our society, there are more laws to protect women. By mistake, if we say something and torture them, we will be taken to the police station. Nowadays, we cannot say anything to a woman. That's why they have more value than men in our society. Even though men have not consumed alcohol, they can say that they have consumed alcohol. (Akash, 33, handloom weaver)*

*No, it breaks the relationship between spouses. See, mistakes are common and it happens. Spouses can do wrong things, whether it is small or big, but they have to adjust with each other. If a woman complains against her husband for small conflicts (at the village or home level), it is solved at the village or home level. (Sadanand, 33, farmer)*

*See, fights happen in angry moods, and the woman will file a case against it. She will give the neighbours' names as witnesses like she is supposed to. Then the police will call everyone and ask their opinion once again about whether she is ready to take back the complaint and compromise within themselves. If the wife is not ready, the police will make an FIR (First Information Report). Then the husband will have to go to jail and he will not wish to spend his life with her anymore, and will obviously divorce her. This is what the consequences are. So I don't think the law is right because it breaks their relationship. (Hamid, 52, coolie)*

Moreover, men felt that the law unfairly discriminated against them:

*I am scared of laws against beating women. Because the laws are very strict. What if I got arrested and kept in jail? (Kulik, 28, driver)*

*Then men cannot use their power on women, because of the fear of laws. Both men and women are human beings - they have to adjust in life. The law must be equal to both men and women. (Ratan, 27, carpenter)*

Instead of changing the systemic ways in which women were exploited and oppressed, laws merely instilled fear into men to not hit women because of the threat of going to jail. The men also assumed that the *Devadasis* were less likely to report acts of violence:

*See, my lover makes adjustments and tolerates it even if I beat her. But I know that I will be punished if (I) commit violence against women outside. (Kiranmay, 24, daily wage labourer/farmer)*

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The men were well aware that these women were less likely to report the beatings, let alone get support from the authorities, as the *Devadasis* were in a vulnerable position. Although there were men who believed in laws protecting women from violence, they still viewed women as responsible for instigating the violence, thereby absolving them from the act. According to the men, the women's responsibility was to ensure men's needs were met and compromises should be made without involving the authorities.

*If the wife co-operates with the husband and understands him and adjusts with him, then men will not drink and they start to take care and think of the family. (Abra, 28, bank peon)*

*Women must have tolerance quality, that is very important and they must listen to men. She should not take tension if she hears something. (Neeraf, 45, farmer)*

In addition, a strong emphasis was placed on women fulfilling their traditional domestic roles to mitigate violence from their partners.

*Women must be hard and aggressive then no men will tease her. She must wear decent dresses like sarees and churidar. If she wear dresses that reveals her body and exposes her breast, men will get tensed and want to rape her. (Nadir, 30, security guard)*

*See, being a woman, she must respect men. She must cover her head with the saree when my uncle comes- that is a way of respecting. If she doesn't do that and when she doesn't cook properly, when she doesn't take care of the children, she deserves to be beaten up. (Kiranmay, 24, daily wage labourer/farmer)*

*Look, if a husband does not beat his wife it means she is very beautiful and even her manners are also good. She gives water to her husband when he comes from outside and she takes care of him completely, makes all the arrangements that he needs. This kind of behavior doesn't make the husband angry - it makes him feel good. (Gajanan, 33, driver)*

*If they start respecting us, and behave properly, then we also will reduce hitting them, we won't get angry with them - if they are good and won't go in a wrong way...so it's good if they behave properly [then] we won't get angry and hit them. If they are good, then such things will reduce. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

The solution to violence against women as offered by the IPs lay with women, not the law. If women were good, beautiful and virtuous as



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defined by them, then violence is averted. Clearly, the men believed that the cause of violence was the women's behaviour. The law appeared to have little relevance in changing the attitudes of the men.

#### 3.7. Implications for Health Interventions

When broaching the subject of how violence can be avoided, both the IPs and FSWs focused on micro, individual-based approaches. The discourse of violence was clearly individualised, and not viewed as a systemic problem. As such, the FSWs provided strategies such as retaliating with violence, threatening to leave their IPs, and even behaving well in order to prevent further violence from their partners.

*In my opinion, tolerance (adjustment) is very important to both men and women. We must control our anger, then no bad incidents will happen and we will be happy in life. Tolerance gives best results and it is the best way to reduce violence. (Ratan, 27, carpenter)*

*Gradually, we should decrease scolding and beating them; we should be calm and relax. We should not hit lovers and they also should be calm. (Waseem, 45, waiter)*

*In my opinion, we can prevent violence through love and trust between lovers...discussions about how to behave and how to lead life can be the way to reduce fights. Speaking respectfully also creates a good relationship. Scolding each other, using bad words also can ruin the relationship. (Quamar, 30, band master/painter)*

Other approaches offered to reduce IPV included the involvement of community elders:

*I tell her once not to do so. She is my wife, so she will be with me and if she repeats it, then we will ask our elders and they will advise her, and make a decision on what to do. She has to respect their decision. (Heman, 25, truck driver)*

Unfortunately, given the strong stigma against FSWs and the importance of family harmony on their sense of masculinity, most men were reluctant to air their grievances with their lovers in the community.

Despite the best efforts from intervention programmes by *Chaitanya AIDS Tadegatuwa Mahila Sangha*, the growing anxiety around STIs and HIV also played a role in the violence against FSWs by their partners.

*If I don't hit her, she will continue with prostitution. She will have sex with other men, and also with me whenever I go, because of which she might get infected with some bad disease and I will get infected*



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*by her and I may lose my life. So I have to hit her. (Fareed, 32, coolie)*

The construction of masculinity as an entity which does not need to take responsibility for its own actions is amply demonstrated in the belief that STD/HIV is transmitted due to the behaviour of women, and not of men.

**Men believed that women are to be blamed for STD/HIV, and it is therefore fitting that they suffer.**

*It is cheap work. No one will talk to her on the streets. Everyone will treat her badly. If she keeps on changing one man after another, she will die from a disease - then it is a lesson for her. (Waseem, 45, waiter)*

#### 3.8. Challenges of Intimate Partner Outreach

It is clear from this study that health interventions must include the IPs of FSWs as they are central to any strategy to halt the spread of HIV/STDs, as well as changing the culture of acceptance around violence against women. The challenge of outreach to these IPs is one of identification as they are not as easily recognized as their lovers in the community. The FSWs can also be placed at risk of violence from her partner if she discloses her relationship to outsiders.

## 5. LIMITATIONS

A few notes of caveat are provided in the following section. Although the research could not account for all the workplaces of the IPs due to conflicts in the investigator and IP's schedule, the researchers used the work experience of men other than the actual IPs in describing the working lives of men in society. The IPs' lack of availability was attributed to their busy and spontaneous work schedule. For example, drivers had to work throughout the day while farmers spent most of their time on the field. In particular, due to the weekly changes in the availability of the water supply, farmers had to change their schedule accordingly to water the fields, which commonly included the night shift. The various obligations and commitments of IPs also encompassed their social and familial duties.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper attempts to explore masculinity in the context of men's precarious labour conditions in relation to intimate partner violence. Although the term 'Intimate Partner' defines the man primarily as the lover of a FSW, the study has shown that these men are also defined by the work they undertake in the public sphere. They are more marked by the exploitation of their working conditions than by their sexual relationships. Unfortunately, 'IP' is an unwieldy category that may not account for the complexities of their lives, which are not much different from the ordinary men in the general public. The study also showed that the respondents viewed violence as an individual act within a relationship, and had no understanding of violence as a systemic problem which is otherwise rooted in society's dominant construction of gender roles. In a time of transforming work conditions, men engaged in intimate physical relationships as a way of securing a sense of control over their precarious environment as well as reforging/reimagining lost bonds. The relationship with their lovers was not merely sexual, but ensconced in layers of pleasure, dependency, intimacy and violence. Given the fact that most of men's lovers were *Devadasis*, they were viewed as more sexually voracious and are in turn more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Yet as terribly violent as disciplining women is, it cannot be understood without recognising that it is laden with tensions that derive from the construction of masculinities. In a culture where patriarchy dictates the norms of social interactions, being a male head of the household entailed the subordination of women to a domestic and subservient role. The exploitation men faced in their work environment was reproduced in the household, which further placed their partners at risk of violence.

On matters of legality, men were wary of the law and viewed it in terms of unfairly discriminating against them and breaking up family cohesion.

Moreover, the act of drinking was a way of regaining composure, a means of release; but paradoxically, through release it was also a means of control. For the IPs who engaged in agricultural or manual labour, violence afforded them a sense of respect and power in the home, which they felt were lacking in their lives. Although their relationships with their lovers and wives served different purposes, violence was a common mechanism through which the men maintained their dominance over women.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

### Recommendations for future programme planning:

- Change the prevailing patriarchal attitudes related to IPV by redefining concepts of masculinity to include respect for women.
- Create a collective/forum for the partners of FSWs to discuss health and relationship challenges, and ways they can find support to deal with alcohol abuse as well as alternative strategies for dealing with their anger.
- Conduct educational workshops for law enforcement authorities, IPs and FSWs to interrogate current roles and ideas of masculinity; and to build awareness of why and how violence against women should be eliminated.
- Select leaders/role models among IPs to speak against IPV. Select FSWs to share strategies on how to deal with violence in their IP relationships.
- Reform the mind-set of the community, as well as the law enforcement agents, to raise their awareness on why domestic violence is a crime.
- Build a solidarity workers group to address the unfair and exploitative work conditions men experience on a daily basis; and to lobby for greater access to formal work opportunities for both women and men. This approach is intended to raise consciousness among men on the systematic and systemic nature of violence and discrimination within society that is reproduced in relationships between men and women.

The work to address violence against women in general, and FSWs in particular, cannot be undertaken without an understanding of how all the stakeholders perceive the issue, and the relationship these stakeholders have within and between them. The overwhelming economic, social and cultural influences on the construction of masculinity and gender roles must be interrogated in order to change public perceptions that violence is an acceptable act within the private sphere of the home. It is hoped that with these recommendations, steps will continue to be taken to achieve this.

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